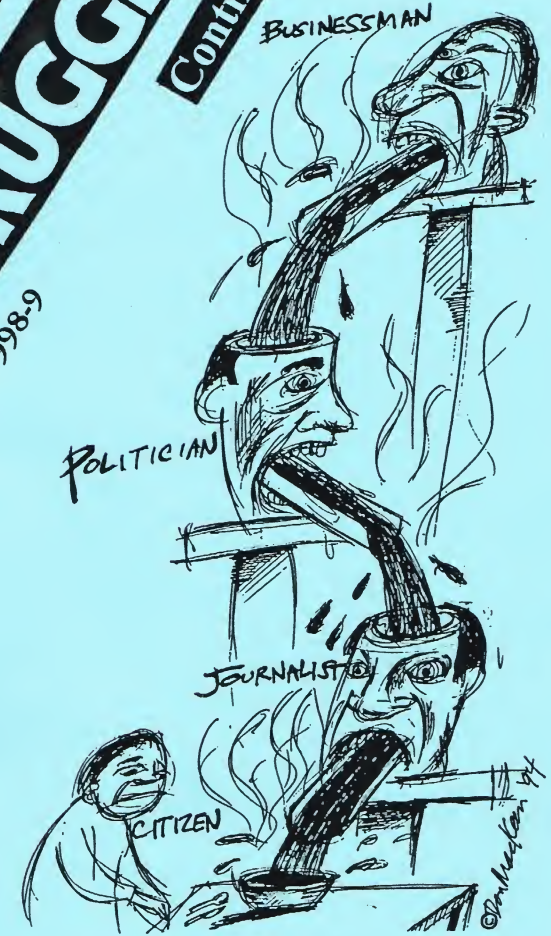


The STRUGGLE

Winter 1998-9

Continues



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STRUGGLE

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Editor's Note:

The rumors of *Struggle's* death have been greatly exaggerated. *Struggle* was, indeed, in deep financial trouble prior to our last issue. But the response to the urgent fund appeal I sent out with that issue was excellent. Many people sent contributions, sometimes together with subscription payments. A number of warm letters of support for the kind of literature that *Struggle* publishes were also received. I want to thank all the readers/writers who so generously responded. The response shows that enthusiasm for revolutionary and progressive creative literature continues, even in the absence of strong mass movements challenging the ruling capitalist class. Information technology, the free market or even increased government intervention, if that develops — none of these will solve the pressing problems of militarism, aggressive war, racism, sexual oppression, the exploitation of the workers, poverty, environmental destruction, etc. Only the working masses through struggle can combat and eliminate these plagues. *Struggle* hopes to contribute to that process by developing a movement of activist creative literature. So the magazine will go on, at least for a while. . As you may have noticed, the magazine is edited and produced by one person — me — there is no office or staff. Bookstore sales are limited and, when the magazines must be mailed, they only break even, if that. So we need subscriptions, subscriptions, subscriptions — the key to a stable financial base.... Again, my thanks to all of you! — Tim Hall

Editor's Note:

Whose Weapons of Mass Destruction?

Once again, American bombers have blasted the Iraqi landscape and killed and maimed Iraqi people — allegedly to eliminate Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. What hypocrisy! The long poem below, by Patrick William Bradley, Jr., who is religious but hates the war-making capitalist Moloch, intimately describes and passionately denounces immensely powerful American weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons which, even 36 years ago, made Saddam's weapons of today look like child's play. And these weapons were used twice against Japan and again almost used during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and later against the Vietnamese. As I once wrote in a poem:

The enemy of American workers
Is not a foreign one.
It schemes in plush-lined offices
In Wall Street and Washington.

— Tim Hall

The Devil's Cathedrals

Foreword

I worked on the Plattsburgh (New York) Atlas Missile Site Complex from October 1961 to August 1962, hired as a timekeeper and later as a clerk, and worked on sites in both New York and Vermont. It was a fantastic experience and the poem captures certain historical information which might be of use to scholars in the future — if there IS a future!

I was the first worker fired, as the poem states, allegedly because of union activity. I notified our union organizer immediately, who called a general strike at four of the twelve huge sites. The strike lasted only a few days, being pitilessly crushed by federal officials in Washington, the contractors, and perhaps even the other unions. Our union's role in the whole affair I have puzzled over for many years and still puzzle over today. Were we, in our desperate fight for a decent living wage — clerical and timekeeper take-home pay was less than \$100 a week while the tradesmen were earning \$600 to \$700 a week — actually pawns in a larger battle? Did John F. Kennedy know of missile site activity, actual or planned, in Cuba as early as 1960 or 1961, when our sites were beginning to be built? Were our sites being constructed to meet the threat that occurred in October of 1962, when we came close to all-out nuclear war? One of the things I never found out was whether or not our missile sites were actually ready enough in October of 1962 to launch missiles. Perhaps it is best I never know. Within a year or so, anyway, the whole multimillion-dollar project was considered obsolete and abandoned, with the missiles moved out by truck caravans....

This poem is dedicated to all the anti-nuclear groups fighting today throughout the world (against) the present nuclear madness. Indeed, the poem is dedicated to the whole human race!

— Patrick William Bradley Jr.

The Devil's Cathedrals

A Missile Worker's Memory of the Plattsburgh (New York) Atlas Missile Site Complex

I helped to build the devil's cathedrals.
In the twelfth century man erected vaulting spires to heaven.
Hands uplifted to where men believed God did dwell.
But I built mine below the earth. 8 levels upside down -- to hell!
I worked in the twentieth century.
I built its nightmare prayers.
Peace by fear of race extermination.
I built -- not just helped to build -- I built by being there.
I was as much afraid, but fear became my prayer.
And so I built -- 3 missile sites.
3 of 12 -- 12 paranoid's delights.
12 awful churches, concrete and steel and iron.
Lit by countless electric candles -- yet still dark.
Dark as 3,000,000,000 nights.
I saw their laborers offer curses as their prayers.
Heard dirty jokes for homilies.
Saw welders' sparks perform their fiery sacrificial rites.
Listened to the throbbing vespers of the diesels.
On the second and fourth levels, generating power.
A ceaseless symphony to lengthen every hour.
An infectious prayer that boomed through endless days and nights.
Above the droning sound, countless flights of stairs.
The upper world with its 2 semicircular huts.
Tropical creatures trembling in the northern air.
2 surface chapels housing nerve and brain.
And from these Quonset chapels came a mighty rosary of work orders.
I fingered them, then delivered them to hell.
I played the bucket to the sunken well.
The ironworkers, the millwrights, the pipefitters, the electricians, the operating
engineers, the painters, the certified welders, the uncertified welders, the
carpenters, the laborers --- they read them and cursed.
"But then, it could have been much worse.
We could have built this whole church right-side-up!
From bottom up, levels 1 through 8.
What a mess that would have been!
The levels go the other way!"
Then came the laughter of tired, sweating men.
There seemed to be no mind to the church body.
Blueprints didn't fit, materials often lacking or inadequate.
But eventually everything was resolved-- more or less.
What wasn't done by plan, was improvised by guess.
The huge silo dug 200 feet into the earth seemed to bellow and chatter its

awful prayers.
Hundreds of men moved within it, minuscule monks or devils, bubbles in a
monstrous glass of beer.
A strange distillery of flesh and soul -- and fear.
Down below, almost invisible in the damp sump, specks tended the pumps
spitting back the deep earth's eternal rivers.
Others measured space for new girders and machines or welded them into
place.
Streams of blue-white fire occasionally lit a star-like face.
The welders were living Roman candles.
Their torches showered the abyss.
Rivets of light, each a ritual kiss.
Sometimes the helmet-splitting pang! of a dropped bolt or wrench.
From 100 or more feet above, one screw can make a dent!
Far above, the 100-foot crane.
A gargoyle at the mouth of the inverted steeple.
Lowering its many-tonned bundles of bologna iron bars,
An idol etched against the sun, sometimes against the stars.
Fantastic, awesome!
Man's hideous gods that move and come and go.
Hard-steeled -- yet from the floor of earthly hell -- ethereal.
A long-necked spider web of shape.
Real and yet not real.
A monster's shadow floating on an empty space.
And 1000 eyes upraised could pray to an iron face.
Crawling along the massive concrete walls on scaffolds, hordes of human flies.
Cleaning or adjusting the giant shock springs meant to bend beneath
Armageddon.
Men so small, to watch them strained the eyes.
Ironworkers, that fearless bunch, walked or ran on girders 200 feet above
perdition!
Their thigh-hanging tools a clinking carillon.
Strangely cheery sounds worshipping both salvation -- and annihilation.
The life or awful death of every single nation.
The horrible prayer to hell this monstrous church could belch!
Each spot of manhood knew.
Each metal sound a cry of birth.
Or funeral oration.
And while men of other centuries hoped their churches would someday be used,
these men could not.
If they were, all human hope was through.
All dreams evaporated in a world of fire.
All sins expiated in plasmic light.
And over earth, the ashes of a cold and pitilessly endless night.
Yet these had to be built.
Fear so decreed.
Fear was a need.

Fear of man the monster.
 Not man of creation, but of senseless destruction.
 The chimpanzee showing his teeth, not his goodwill.
 The love of blood, of conquest, of rape, of pillage, of WINNING -- by any means!
 These were once by most men in several ways glorified.
 Now they are a little less.
 For most men have a deep aversion -- to being fried.
 The search for heaven in deepest hell.
 Building the most horrible death in supposed search of life.
 The plowshare-sword.
 The self-forced blasphemy turned to a sacred word.
 Patriotism, love of family, and downright self-preservation of one's own precious
 hide.
 By taking everybody else's off.
 There was a room -- a hair-raising chapel -- I remember it well.
 I ate lunch in it.
 A round pillbox it was, buried just beneath the surface.
 The Launch Control Complex.
 It was connected to the cathedral by a round tunnel, and at a right angle.
 Like some ancient geometric hex.
 In this room was a beautiful organ.
 It looked like a low desk and its base was light green.
 Its pipes were buried beneath it, all unseen.
 There were no keys, just buttons.
 There was a green button, an amber button, a red button, and a crystal-clear
 button.
 Pretty, pretty little buttons.
 One above the other, on the right-hand side.
 To the left, little lighted windows with needles in them.
 Strange, strange organ -- for some hideous hymn!
 As I munched on a sandwich and looked at it, I wondered.
 If someday somebody would play a solo on it.
 The last solo in the world.
 That little crystal-clear button.
 It would play the last note.
 But where would the echo go?
 And who would hear it?
 Often as I watched the antish creatures swarming over the launch platform, I felt
 quietly strange.
 As if reality were deranged.
 But even with all that noise, my thoughts were clear.
 On an incredible day or night -- it might happen.
 Without much time -- much fear.
 The huge elevator would carry up the "bird", the deadly 90-ton lance.
 Up to the mouth of the sunken cathedral.
 Up where multi-ton doors of reinforced concrete yawned open.
 The gates of hell prevailing.

The warning horns wailing.
 The hell of earth travelling.
 Giving birth.
 Up, up, up -- so easily, so painlessly, so agreeably.
 Up to the end of time.
 And in a flash of fire, the "bird" would jerk skyward.
 At 18,000 miles per hour.
 To commit the final crime.
 With all the others.
 With all mankind.
 It all seemed a dream,
 An impossibly, pleasantly, majestically awful dream.
 But I was real.
 And I could argue with myself-- it must be done for peace.
 It is the only way.
 I had to do this, we had to do this.
 Peace through deterrence.
 But then -- I always had to ask myself one question.
 What would another generation say?
 What would it care about our dreams and hopes and fears?
 Particularly if their world had too few eyes for tears.
 If all had failed -- and still some people remained.
 If all the earth were death, and poison fell for rain.
 If the children born were the twisted roots of man.
 If seas were turned to rock salt and mountains into sand.
 If -- but then a stranger thought!
 A small spider's smallest thread.
 What if these damned churches kept the peace?
 What if-- in some strange way -- war ceased?
 War ceased to be -- and slaves somehow set free?
 But this thought never lasted long.
 Insane things so sane have such, short lives.
 Such righteousness is always wrong.
 For men, for nations, for worlds. ♪
 Dreams!
 All finely structured snowflakes in the sun.
 That which is right is the devil's delight to destroy.
 All this was the sanest madness.
 Odd -- no time for fear's tremulous sensation.
 No time for sadness.
 All this was easy -- for this was the thing to do.
 Most everybody asked what else there was to do.
 And nobody of most everybody knew.
 So this is what most everybody told everybody else to do.
 In a way, the whole damned thing reminded me of the manner these cathedrals
 were being built.
 How even weirder -- it was as if man were building himself.

For in these places, in these Quonsets and sites and machines -- was man.
 Confusion and order, vice and virtue, fear and hope, death and life.
 12 men would never see their families again.
 I must in written words remember them.
 No monument stands to recall their final sacrifice.
 No golden stars, no honorary artifact.
 Just widows and orphans.
 One had been standing in the sump when, 200 feet above, a bar of bologna iron
 fell.
 Slipped from a bundle dangling from the crane.
 It came down, a whistling spear, end-first.
 A gift from heaven to hell.
 He looked up, threw up his hands.
 Grotesque futility!
 Straight on his head it struck.
 Smashed his safety cap into 2 nutshells.
 Pierced his body lengthwise.
 Buried itself a foot in concrete between his feet.
 Shish-kebabbed, he wobbled, the whole bar in him from head
 to crotch and through.
 So forceful the blow he never bled.
 I'm sure he never knew that he was dead.
 Pneumatic hammers dug out the end buried in concrete.
 And there was that poor engineer.
 He was straddled 40 feet above the sump on some beams.
 Inside the personnel elevator shaft.
 Busily sighting with his surveying scope on some target below.
 Above him, the 27-ton elevator.
 And some damned fools.
 They didn't press the warning bell to announce their descent.
 Or they did, and the noise of the diesels drowned it out.
 Who knows?
 So down came the elevator.
 He looked up.
 We saw it.
 He could jump to his death in the machine-jagged sump 40 feet below.
 Or wait for death to jump down to him.
 He waited and no doubt thought about his young wife and children.
 Squash.
 A heel upon a flea.
 Blood poured like rain on the startled men below.
 A red and horrible thing that pissed over machines, instruments, and helmets.
 It took hours to cut out flesh and steel with torches.
 For an incredible day, his torso lived.
 All the rest of him was pulp.
 And then there were the 2 painters.
 Their scaffolding failed 100 feet up.

An end rope slackened and the board tipped.
 Gradually and horribly.
 One man held on for life.
 The other -- fell.
 Screaming, waving his hands, a blur of flesh.
 A splattering thud.
 The diesels kept up their throbbing.
 The other man was pulled up.
 Quivering like a beaten spaniel.
 Paint mixed with blood.
 And in the noise -- an awful silence.
 But no respect.
 Oh yes, here and there, a shaken heart.
 But gratitude is never Satan's pence.
 Fear is its own recompense.
 Tears of wives and children the only monuments.
 And there were many others.
 Some fell, some were otherwise crushed.
 In the winter, the ever-seeping water froze.
 Huge icicles formed on the silo walls.
 Mosaics for the strange cathedrals.
 The iconoclast laborers smashed at them with hammers.
 Some of these blasphemers slipped-- and the devil laughed.
 The belly of hell swallowed each insignificant crash.
 And of course, tired, pressured men get drunk.
 And drunken men drive wildly.
 2 in a car took a barn apart on their way from work.
 At 100 miles per hour.
 And it took them apart, too.
 5 kids fatherless.
 Perhaps it was the speed.
 Perhaps the times.
 Perhaps all these sweetened death and crimes.
 But then --- the world-was an anthill.
 A writhing mass of man.
 A honeycomb of greed.
 The cathedrals could not swallow up their fill.
 Vast mouths, Baals demanding sacrifice.
 No man meant much before this god.
 3 thousand million souls demand an awful price.
 The price of fear, of greed, of hate.
 One single soul meant less than a paper plate.
 Such things are true.
 Man --- the self-devouring fat.
 Man needs himself to live.
 As he needs cattle and swine.
 Blood makes the headiest wine.

When brewed with the grapes of wrath.
 And the contractors harvested the vine.
 And the air force added its frenzied thirst.
 And the labor unions wolfed their shares -- and more.
 And the vast vortex of man was a whirlwind of abrasive wills.
 What if a little red wine spills?
 At THIS Last Supper, fit apostles were on hand.
 A *mélange* of generals, colonels, majors, captains.
 All very trim and grim.
 And apoplectically red foremen and supervisors.
 And of course, a thousand drones.
 Buzzing blurs.
 Inspectors, inspectors, inspectors!
 Peek-a-boo, who is watching who?
 Fit environment for the hungry sly.
 Money and materials endlessly piling high.
 A breeding ground for good sheep and select wolves.
 Hares and owls, flies and spiders.
 A million dollars a day in wages alone.
 More money, more men, more materials.
 More fat for the sacrificial bone!
 But one group did not share as well as others in the cornucopia.
 The timekeepers and the clerks.
 They had no union.
 And then -- a union moved in.
 Mortally mortal sin!
 Secretly slithered the syndicate.
 But too late, too late, too late!
 Construction time running out.
 But what are souls to those who conscience flout?
 Those timekeepers and clerks who had signed up for free union elections were
 fired.
 Some of their own, it was said, quickly exposed their friends.
 And allegedly were promoted by the company.
 Their fired friends were turned out into the cold of winter.
 One had 5 kids and no money for heating fuel.
 Many ineligible for unemployment insurance.
 Not enough time in one state.
 Often they worked on sites in 2 different states, and couldn't claim enough time
 in either.
 The traitors, it was asserted, became well-paid office men.
 And then --- fury!
 A shutdown.
 4 sites.
 Picket lines.
 "Honor us!" cried the clerks' and timekeepers' signs.
 At first, the other unions did.

Failure to respect this basic right brought fines.
 This right to unionize, this most basic right of man in a cobweb world.
 The unions remembered their early years of strife.
 They punished hard the breakers of the bond of life.
 But -- too bad, too bad.
 This was a different world with a different god.
 Somebody spoke in Washington.
 And the "fellow" unions, like good dogs -- heeled.
 And fell upon their fellow workers.
 Not with fists -- but treachery.
 It was said the ironworkers didn't even wait.
 Reputedly scabbed before Washington decreed.
 Can there be such greed?
 Rumored to have sneaked in at night to man the crane.
 Then the other unions scabbed.
 Millwrights, pipemen, painters, electricians, operating engineers, welders,
 carpenters, laborers -- all scabbed.
 Some mumbled they didn't want to scab, had never scabbed, but had to scab.
 Washington said so.
 This was a critical industry.
 What were the rights of a few clerks and timekeepers compared to national
 defense?
 To national survival?
 In what war did justice ever make sense?
 Anyone knows that freedom is an obstinate slut.
 And peace her pimp.
 This was the cold war!
 Down with rights, down with striking unions, down with dissent, down with
 loyalty!
 Down, down, down!
 Up, scabs, up, greed, up, fear, up, backstabbers!
 Not another day's delay!
 A promotion for every goddam scamp!
 Those who believe democracy's self-sufficient -- have never seen boot camp.
 And like a great mass of mindless swine, honorable and dishonorable men
 learned the true meaning of honor.
 Redefined.
 Twentieth-century style.
 The moral gilding became the bitter bile.
 So they poured like clots in a rotten bloodstream.
 Through the gates of the great cathedral yards.
 Scabby libations to the new Moloch.
 Moloch, the mindless machine.
 The moneymaking, soul-selling, fear-flogging machine.
 Some of the clerks and timekeepers were rehired.
 After 5 months without work or aid.
 No elections would be held.

Or were they?
 I don't remember.
 What happened to the other clerks and timekeepers?
 I don't remember.
 Nobody was sure.
 Planted rumors ran wildly.
 I -- the first fired -- was rehired.
 For a month.
 As assistant to an accountant in the central office.
 Away from my fellow workers.
 The others were scattered, too.
 Like leaves before the first winter blizzard.
 And then my job was declared no longer necessary.
 The clerical work vanished.
 So did that mysterious union that had fought -- too late.
 Disenchanted blind date!
 I had never heard of it until a superior clerk told me many weeks before I'd
 better join -- or else.
 He said he had.
 I was told he never lost a day but was promoted!
 He never mentioned all the spies that infiltrated the organizing ranks.
 The strange cabals, the shadows on the walls.
 The "secret" meetings had a hundred keyholes in their confessional stalls.
 Who had a soul, who not?
 Who was substance, who was rot?
 There was a National Labor Relations Board meeting.
 I was one of witness-victims.
 The corpse was kicking.
 The lawyers yakked it out.
 One was a vice president of the union!
 Or so he said.
 He had been our organizer!
 The other a whiz-kid flown in from Los Angeles by the companies.
 Somebody said it was a \$20,000 trip!
 Man, that was a show!
 Some clerks suddenly were found to be supervisors.
 Had been all along --- could never join the union!
 Made strange statements under oath.
 Clerks one moment, supervisors the next.
 Or maybe always supervisors.
 Who knows?
 Who knew?
 They didn't seem to.
 4 and 4 made 2.
 I never felt so small.
 So useless.
 So much a pawn in a senseless game.

I joined because I had to join.
 I feared losing my job.
 And because I joined, I lost my job.
 And once joined, I did not betray.
 And so I was betrayed.
 Like many others --- by others.
 Here the Ten Commandments were upside-down.
 And the golden rule.
 I learned that men in power were there because they had their own version.
 And because the cowardly and ignorant accepted it.
 Do unto others before they do unto you.
 Christ was not the priest here, but Machiavelli.
 Here, in these cathedrals, I grew up.
 I learned true wisdom,
 I learned it from the devil.
 Man.
 Crush, grind the weak into the dirt!
 Smash without a moment's hesitation!
 The merciless shall inherit the earth!
 The insidious own the nation!
 The spies and ruthless thugs.
 The legions of leering, sucking leeches.
 The seemers, not the dreamers.
 The peepers and the creepers.
 And the creeps.
 And while the dumb sheep believe that heroes will protect them-- ha-ha!
 A laughter seemed to resound whenever I thought this, and
 I would often laugh myself.
 Of course, freedom has its price!
 The price is -- freedom!
 There is no freedom.
 There is every freedom.
 There is justice.
 But never for you.
 For the other guy.
 The stronger guy.
 The guy with just that less a conscience.
 The best man being -- he with no conscience at all!
 This is what the "bird" meant to me.
 I saw it one night when I went back into a cathedral.
 The great Atlas missile pointed to the stars.
 Strange, star-sighting, silver spire.
 Uncrossed.
 My guardian.
 My devourer.
 Built on a few small travesties of justice.
 Glistening in its bloated silver shell.

Horrible -- yet thought necessary-- god.
 Built by my century and my kind of monstrously wise fool.
 Constructed by the freest slaves the world had ever known.
 To annihilate the most enslaved slaves the world had ever known.
 There it was.
 Silvery, fantastic, as beautiful as it was awful, seen as necessary
 as it was evil.
 Because of evil.
 It would be there when I no longer worked there.
 It would be there one week in October, 1962.
 When a planet seemed bent to burn itself.
 Cuba.
 Castro .
 Krushchev.
 Kennedy.
 Photographs.
 Russian missile sites in Cuba.
 Pretty little things just like ours.
 Kennedy warned Krushchev.
 Turn back your missile-laden ships.
 Get the missile sites out of Cuba!
 I was told the cathedrals were alive those days and nights.
 I wasn't there, but others were.
 And years later, their eyes shone.
 Fear and horror.
 A kind of awful prayer.
 Whether all or some or any of the "birds" were ready may be
 an eternal secret.
 But now -- it doesn't matter.
 The sites are empty now.
 The Atlases, the underground churches -- all obsolete!
 Obsolete!
 What a joke!
 The men who died.
 Obsolete!
 But the idea -- ?
 Well, of course not.
 Better cathedrals have been built.
 More compact.
 More efficient.
 More destructive.
 And more "necessary."
 Now only the empty holes of the last places of worship remain.
 The government's trying to get the towns to buy them.
 Ha, ha, ha!
 The towns will, I'm sure.
 But I hope they can keep all that water out of the holes.

Without pumps and a couple diesels apiece, it may prove a wet bargain!
 Ha, ha, ha!
 Water from hell.
 I don't know what the towns will do with the holes.
 Turn them into California-style swimming pools, maybe.
 With 200 feet to the bottom of each?
 Oh, it's all funny -- cruelly funny.
 Like the 2 missile sites each built adjacent to a boneyard.
 Talk about symbolic significance!
 And now how stark the Quonset chapels seem, their fearful prayers silenced
 forever.
 The wind whistles strange memories over the barren holes and their naked
 acreage.
 Something hideous as a child's sobbing.
 Something enormous as the human race spills through each quiet place.
 Children somewhere beyond giggle like robins.
 The sobbing stops.
 The life-death churches are bare.
 A dark asphalt road goes up to each dark rim.
 A road to nowhere.

By Patrick William Bradley, Jr.

An Additional Editor's Note:

Patrick Bradley's poem describes and denounces the American weapons of mass destruction which still threaten the world; it also shows the cost paid by the workers to build and maintain such weapons for the rich rulers to use to murder and plunder workers of other countries. Not only are these weapons instruments of genocide because they are inevitably directed against civilian populations and not just armies, but the lives of workers are thrown away in their construction. Bradley exposes the heartlessness of the capitalist bosses and their union-leader pawns who unite to crush the organizing drive of the clerical workers on the project. The picture that emerges from Bradley's poem is that of a brutal, inhuman behemoth of a system, a true Iron Heel, more powerful than that described by Jack London. The only questions that remain are: can this infernal war machine be opposed, and, if so, how? The anti-war masses of the '60's, in their marching millions, answered the first question with a powerful YES -- IT CAN BE OPPOSED! And they partly answered the second: YES -- BY MASS ACTION! The latter part of this second question involves how such a movement can be created, what its main forces will be, and how it should be led. In my opinion this problem will be solved by a revived, anti-revisionist theory of Marxism-Leninism. -- *Tim Hall*

Chaotic Order

During a televised omen,
I saw a radioactive nightmare
near a laboratory of black disaster,
silhouetted against the red dawn.
I saw a business man
dressed like a kamikaze,
flying upon a magic carpet
designed out of thousand-dollar bills
with a briefcase nailed to his heart,
his heart full of baneful motives,
debased undertakings,
and mean, synthetic icons,
with bloody hooks for hands,
with cracked glass eyes,
with business cards stapled to his tongue,
with computer chips for brain cells,
and oil-stained garlands
wrapped around his throat.
I saw him hovering, hovering
above a factory of recycled mythologies,
next to a warehouse filled
with pallets of comatose brains,
shelves of mechanical limbs,
and crates of plastic hearts.
And during the televised omen,
through purple vapors of death,
I saw a graveyard of cars counting their blessing,
the black servant sun puking atoms,
the pale moon vomiting nuclear waste,
stars coughing up blood,
rivers overflowing with pus,
beaches gagging on rude crude oil,
streets emitting toxic waste,
acid rain beating, beating, beating,
down upon buildings, upon statues,
and park benches, and trees.
And, I saw, and I felt,
effigies and skeletons rising
from the fibers of flames,
riding horseback upon perturbed bullets,
perturbed by psychological death squads,
by milestones of madness,
by dysfunctional nerves,
and embittered veins,

taking aim and firing
upon handbooks of nuclear rain dances,
guidebooks of false prayers,
upon mapped out ambitions,
lamed promises, and imprisoned hope,
and polluted dreams of televised omens.

By Vincent Obregon

Shootout at the OK Corral

"What are you people looking for? Armageddon?" demanded Dr. "D," the factory manager. A tall, straight man with big shoulders and white hair, Dr. "D" looked like a typical corporate douchebag with his starched white shirt, plain black tie, and charcoal grey suit pants. Or maybe an undertaker. His sleeves were typically rolled up. "I've presented a coherent, well-thought-through plan to you, and all I get from you people is grief and complaints. We all have to get behind this special project, people, and shove a quality product out the door to our customer.

"Shove it up our asses, you meath," said Don, the millwright. Don, a powerful young man, looked like a professional wrestler. He wore his hair in a "Mohawk," bald on the sides and standing straight up in the narrow strip on top.

The other workers all laughed at Don's honest assessment. They had been assembled in a small, blockhouse-style office located in the middle of the huge Chicago factory. Outside of the blockhouse people wilted in the torrid Midwestern summer heat in the surrounding factory. It was 4 p.m.. Sherry the millwright, Gilbert, the African American line mechanic, Oliver, the old machinist, and David, the alcoholic welder, made up Don's audience. The first shift people, Don, Gilbert, and David were hot and tired and wanted to go home. The second shifters, Sherry and Oliver, were fresh, but didn't savor the idea of having to leave the stale air conditioning and start work, so the longer the meeting lasted, the happier they were.

"What was that? What did you say?"

"You're breaking our balls, man. I don't work fucking Sunday's. I'm already working six days a week. Whatta ya want? My whole fucking life?" Don replied.

"He's not breaking my balls, 'cause I don't have any," said Sherry. She laughed hard at her own joke. So did the others. Sherry had divorced her husband and had been

granted custody of her seven-year-old son. She missed a lot of work in order to do things with her son.

David, who sat next to her in the coffin-sized air-conditioned office, laughed along with her, although with a mixture of embarrassment.

Disconcerted, Dr. "D" thought to himself that he was dealing with a typical bunch of irrational factory workers. Rude, crude, and always ready to interrupt with any kind of idiocy that came to mind. He wished federal laws permitted factory managers to carry sidearms. When they were bored, they didn't even have the decency to pretend to be interested. They simply started talking, out of turn, to each other. Sherry, in turn, wondered what the "D" was short for. The shop floor speculation ran from "death" to "destruction" to "dummy."

"I think we should call Maria in here and represent us," said Sherry.

"Yeah, man, where's our union representation?" demanded Gilbert.

"Look, you don't need any union representation because nothing we're doing here is against your union contract. Mr. Glashauser, here, the industrial electronic consultant who I've brought in, says that you will only be required to work every other Sunday." Dr. "D" invited Glashauser to raise his hand in acknowledgement. A thinner, bespectacled version of Dr. "D," Glashauser bestowed a cursory nod in the direction of the workers. The perfunctory gesture was as good as a neon sign which would have spelled out "I-am-a-jerk."

"Yes, but you want us to work every Saturday as well. And a full shift to boot. It's too much. We're human beings, not robots," said Oliver, the ancient machinist, a man who was too physically beat-up with too many ailments to work *any* overtime. "We appreciate the time and effort that you must have put into this project, but you should think about seeing if there are any volunteers first instead of forcing us to do it."

"Yeah, that's right, man," said Gilbert.

"We're the management here. When you start making the decisions," and Dr. "D" stared directly at Oliver as he said this, "we'll just hand you the keys to the factory."

"Who the fuck is this Glashauser dude, anyway? How the fuck does he know anything about what we do around here?" asked Don.

"Mr. Glashauser is a distinguished engineer, a renowned consultant, and will soon be opening his own electronics factory. The man knows automation."

Glashauser finally spoke in high, tiny voice. "We have to work as a team, union and management."

"Won't this project wind up putting some machine operators out of work permanently?" asked David.

"Are any of you machine operators?"

No one responded. "Well, then what do you care? The factory will be that much more productive and competitive as a result. Your jobs will be that much more secure."

"This sucks," said Sherry. She wasn't combative enough to stare Dr. "D" in the eyes, so she shook her head sadly, and stared at the concrete floor.

"If that's all you people have in the question department, be prepared to commence work on this project tomorrow, starting with first shift."

Everyone filed out of the office and entered the blast of midsummer heat shrouding the vast expanse of the shop floor.

* * * * *

Meeting later, after midnight, in one of the factory's bleak, dirty break rooms, David met with Sherry for coffee. Sherry bought two styrofoam cups full of instant coffee from a machine. The coffee reminded her of hot brown water. She often pressed the "sugar" and "cream" buttons in order to kill the taste of the brew. The break room smelled like stale donuts.

Sherry was working second shift overtime past midnight. David often celebrated starting his shift with an immediate coffee break because white-shirted bosses were few and far between on third shift. Overhead, a fluorescent light flickered and buzzed.

"We should get everyone together and have a meeting. Maybe sign a petition, then take it to the union" said David.

"Shit. The union can't do nothin', man. They ain't doin' anything against the contract. They got a provision in there about special projects and compulsory overtime. We're fucked as usual."

"Yeah, but I think we should get everyone together and talk about it," David insisted.

"How ya gonna get everybody together, man? Oliver and me both work second shift. They keep bouncing you between first and third. Don and Gilbert are both on first. When the fuck are we gonna be able to get together?"

"Oh, well. I'll just save up the overtime money I make off Glashauser's project. I'll be that much closer to getting out of here and opening a welding shop in California."

"Like hell, David. You're gonna die here in Chicago like the rest of us. If Dr. "D" doesn't fire you first, that is." Sherry laughed. Typically in good humor, although twice fired herself, Sherry prided herself on her supreme realism.

"What do you plan to do about the project? You don't want to work any additional over-time. You told me so. You don't get enough time with your son as it is."

"Fuck off, what else? I might come in, but I ain't actually gonna *do* anything. Fuck them."

David nodded absently.

"What can we do? A petition won't do any good. There's not enough of us involved in the project. They'll just laugh at a petition. If we bring it up at the union meeting, the district rep will just tell us the company has the right to do it because it's in the contract. Right? So, we're screwed. We can't do anything."

"You know what, that's right."

"What?"

"We can't do anything."

"What?"

"I'll run the idea past Don."

Oliver barged into the breakroom. He was carrying his newspaper and lunchbox, and his dirty uniform over his shoulder. He was obviously prepared to go home.

"Ready to work every other Sunday, Oliver?" David asked in a jocular manner.

"Like hell," the old machinist said while operating the coffee machine.

"Tell your doctor to write you an excuse," said Sherry.

"Doctor my ass," responded Oliver. "This is what I got for Mr. Glashauser and the company." So saying, Oliver firmly grabbed his genitals and gave them a firm upward pull. David and Sherry laughed at the sight of the angry old man.

"Gonna give 'em hell, huh, Oliver?" asked Sherry.

"They want a war," Oliver stabbed his finger in the direction of Sherry and David, "then they can have a fucking war. I been fightin' wars with this company for 30 years."

"ALL RIGHT," said Sherry clapping her hands.

The coffee machine pissed hot brown water down the drain chute. The machine was out of cups. Oliver cursed.

* * * * *

The following morning at 6 a.m. Don sauntered up to Gilbert. As a millwright, Don had the run of the factory unlike the machine operators who were rooted to the concrete floor in front of their particular piece of industrial real estate. The two had hardly exchanged words in the past. Don had been raised in Montana in a typical white working-class mining family. Unlike the typical white working-class families from Chicago who ritualistically hated "niggers," Don had been raised to ritualistically hate Native Americans. Consequently, he was open to approaching Gilbert, although he had never spoken to any African Americans before moving to Illinois.

Gilbert had met and had actually shaken hands with Doctor King when he marched into Cicero, a Chicago suburb. Gilbert never looked to start shit with anybody. Like the Bible said, turn the other cheek. But a man could only take so much shit. Gilbert had drawn a line in his mind. Not a hotheaded type, Gilbert liked to reason things out. But when they pushed him too far, Gilbert was prepared to fight. And he had fought, repeatedly, in his quarter century in Chicago's factories, with his racist fellow workers as well as the bosses.

"Whatta ya gonna do about the project?" asked Don, a young man who always went directly to the point.

"I don't know, man. What you think of the project?" Gilbert trusted his co-workers only after they had demonstrated that they were worthy of trust.

"I ain't coming in. I already went up and talked to the union business agent. He said wasn't nothin' they could do. I talked to Maria then, and she said don't get sucked into a situation where they could call it 'insubordination'."

"Maria has to say that. She's the union steward. Well, y'all know this 'project' is gonna mess my line up something fierce, man. I'm gonna hafta tear everything down, all the set-ups, put in the project tooling after Oliver makes it, then tear it all out on Sundays, and then put the regular stuff back in by starting time on Monday. I'm getting messed over worst than y'all, man. I'm gettin' hammered the mostest of anybody."

"Fuck it, man. I ain't gonna cooperate," said Don. "When they tell me to do something, I'll say, ok, but I won't do nothin'. Fuck 'em."

"We gonna see what comes down, man. Seems like in this country, people either be over-worked or unemployed. This gonna be the shootout at the OK Corral, man," said Gilbert.

"I don't think so. I think it's gonna be more like a firecracker that fizzes. Everybody is gonna wait around for that loud bang but it just won't happen."

Gilbert looked at Don, then as the strategy dawned on him, said, "I get ya." He winked and made a shooting gun gesture at Don.

* * * * *

Alexander Glashauser and Dr. "D" adamantly pushed their project forward despite continuing and escalating setbacks. The machinist continually called in sick, delaying the tooling. When they demanded that he produce a doctor's dispensation, he cheerfully produced one. They finally had to assign the project work to him during his regular workshift because it became clear he could dodge all the overtime.

Then the special tooling continually shattered after heat treatment in a very mysterious fashion. In exasperation, the managers finally sent out the blueprints for the tooling to a small job shop. Miraculously, the problems cleared up. They didn't know what the machinist had been doing to the steel, but he had been doing something to it. Then welding problems cropped up, causing the new tooling to warp. When "hot stick" David was removed from the project, and the welding sent out, the warps magically disappeared.

Getting the new tooling installed on Gilbert's line proved to be difficult. Dr. "D" fired Sherry for absenteeism after she repeatedly failed to show up for overtime. Don, on the other hand, always seemed to be cheerfully cooperative, although he invariably found problems with the tooling or welding resulting in sending various components back to the vendors for eternal re-working. Twice, Alexander Glashauser suspected sabotage, but he couldn't prove anything, although he did raise the issue with Dr. "D."

Glashauser took up the habit of watching directly over Don's shoulders as the millwright installed various belts, gears, sprockets, timers, and sensors. One day, Glashauser took up position on the opposite side of a shaft from Don, as Don prepared to replace a sprocket. Seizing the opportunity, Don gave the sprocket one mighty blow, and sent the speeding projectile sailing down the entire length of the shaft and into Glashauser's very surprised face. After he returned from the emergency room, Glashauser rarely shadowed Don any more.

After interminable stalling, Gilbert began slowly changing over his line to accommodate the new tooling.

The day Gilbert finally got it up and running the customer, thoroughly annoyed, canceled the entire order. And so goes "team" cooperation in factories all over the Psychotic Atomik Empire.

Maria got Sherry's job back for her a third time.

By Greg Norton

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The Abingdon Argument

I'm eating alone
in an Abingdon diner,
sure people are looking
at me. It's my paranoia.
What's yours?

In a nearby booth,
a guy asks another guy: If
capitalism ended,
what spur would make people
work hard? He believed
in spurs, his face

full of them. His friend
took a sip of coffee
and asked how much
harder did he think people
had to work -- how much

more of our lives need
to be taken from us?

By Kenneth Pobo

Moloch Loves the Little Children

Suffer little children
to come into my sweat shops
and work dawn to dusk
six days a week
for 15 cents an hour
and forbid them not
employment
in sex tourist brothels
for from such labor
has the mammoth wealth
of the global market
grown

By Calokie

Battle at the Gower Avenue Gate, December, 1935 (Cb.17)

*Two chapters from Thunder On The Mountain, by David Poyer,
Forge Books, March 1999*

The basement of the Petroleum City police station, and blue-uniformed city cops and Thunder plant cops in gray standing contemplatively around several heavy wooden boxes stenciled AGRICULTURAL HARDWARE.

— Invoice, said Chief Foster, waving the flimsy. Deatherage pointed to Wheeler, who came over and took it out of Foster's hand.

— We don't want any trouble, now, said the police chief. — That's why we agreed to help out on this.

— There won't be any trouble, Jerry. That's what this is all for, to make sure there won't be any. This all must be secret, by the way. I don't want to show we anticipate anything. That would only aggravate the situation. I'm sure you don't want to do that.

— Of course not, said Foster, stroking his moustache. His eye lingered on a small blue pin on Deatherage's overcoat lapel. He leaned closer. — What force were you with?

— Sorry?

— That's an F.O.P. pin, ain't it?

— Honorary member. Awarded by the national committee. Well, let's take a look, said Deatherage. The company cops looked at Wheeler, who nodded. They started prying the covers off.

Inside the boxes were long red tubes, short-barreled break-open guns, and boxes of shells marked CAUTION. GAS. A guard picked up a mask and tried it on. They looked at his goggled eyes, the queer unhuman muzzle. Deatherage selected one of the guns. He broke it open across his arm and tried a shell in it.

Wheeler. — Something wrong?

— No, no. Just checking they sent us the proper caliber. He replaced the gun, rooted around in the crate a bit more, then beckoned to the police chief. He handed him a small black object. — Looks like a pen, doesn't it? It's yours. Here's a box of cartridges. Just don't try it out in an enclosed space.

Foster turned it in his fingers. — How good is this stuff? Ever seen it used?

— Indeed I have. I think anyone who comes in range of it will not invite another dose. Please be careful, you don't want to fire that in a closed space.

As the chief examined it, the Thunder guards finished laying everything out on the floor. Deatherage walked along the line, splitting each pile of equipment down the middle. When they were all divided, the gas shells and guns and tear-gas clubs and nauseating-gas jumper-repeaters, he made a peremptory motion. Wood screeched as the guard nearest him pried up the lid on the last crate.

Four Thompson submachine guns nestled in their wooden compartments. The chief watched as Deatherage handed two to his men, along with drum magazines and boxes of .45 cartridges.

When the division was complete the guards replaced the half reserved for Thunder into the cases. They positioned the lids and hammered them back on.

As they carried the crates up the steps and into the back of a well service truck, Deatherage took out a cigarette and a box of hotel matches. But munitions were still exposed, and he held it unlit as he asked Foster where a good place might be to demonstrate the gas-bombs and gas-guns, and get everybody trained and used to working together in case things turned sour. The chief suggested the Hemlock County Gun Club, east of town. Deatherage asked if it could be reserved, and privacy assured. They agreed on the day after tomorrow.

By then all the crates were gone, Thunder's share to the truck, the city's share disappearing back into the steeldoor basement armory. Deatherage winked at the chief, extracted a flask from his overcoat, and they shared a nip.

Foster said, — So what's Dan planning? I hear he couldn't get the workers from the other refineries to lift a hand.

— They did at first. But that red bitch got to them, poisoned them against working at all. I'm telling you, she's gonna have to be dealt with. He lit the cigarette, then held the match steady to light Foster's. — Something like that, I've always seen it as a local responsibility. Aren't there any wide-awake, patriotic Americans in this town?

— There's a few. But —

— But what?

The chief didn't answer. Instead he said again, — So what's Dan planning now?

— We've arranged for some outside missionaries. Men who are available for temporary work and are reliable hands.

Foster lowered the flask. — Strong-arm boys? I don't want any trouble, Mr. Deatherage.

Deatherage carefully kept contempt from his face and voice. The sheep kept bleating that: — No trouble, no trouble. What good was a cop who recoiled from a scrap? — That is my goal too. But to settle this matter, we have to get these slackers back to work. It's gone beyond a disagreement about safety and wages. The company has offered to compromise, yet still they refuse to return. It's simple pigheadedness now. Or worse. You must see that. This can't be doing Main Street any good.

— No, holiday sales are way down.

— Everyone's losing money. Isn't there something the city council, the mayor can do to fix this thing up?

— We've tried. You're right, they don't want to listen. Oh, and I heard a rumor about trouble over at Holderlin. That's going to shut the town right down, if they go out too.

— See how it spreads? Chief, we need to talk about making my men deputies. If those Reds down at Number One start any rough stuff, I'd hate to have them walking around without any kind of legal protection.

Foster said he'd ask the city attorney. Shortly afterward Deatherage touched his hat-brim. They shook hands, and he climbed the stairs up to the street level.

The truck was gone, and the alley behind the great sooty brickpile of City Hall was filled with the motionless mist of early morning. This high in the hills, the clouds seemed to descend at night, filling the valleys and hollows with silvery tendrils of cloud-stuff. Deatherage stood by his car, musing over his preparations. The munitions had been the last item. That fool Vansittart had objected. Said he didn't like the idea of gassing his employees. He'd pointed out patiently that the idea was to have protective measures in place; if things got ugly it was far better to depend on gas than bullets. But this says machine guns, Vansittart had said. Why am I ordering machine guns?

To guard against the worst, Deatherage had told him. Better to have the wherewithal to put down violence, and not have to use it, then it was to be caught short when agitators whipped the mob into riot. As they had in a number of cases in which he had been involved. Anyway, the guns were registered to the city police; they were only on loan to the plant protection force. He'd advised the plant manager to see to several other matters along the same lines. Another fire fighting line and a steam line should be run to the main gate. Trucks should be furnished ready to rush reinforcements from point to point. And he'd recommended to the mayor that city employees remove the motley collection of used railroad ties and tires and so forth from the riverbank in the vicinity of the gate. So far, he hadn't seen any action taken on that one; but those he'd recommended to Thunder, all had been completed.

#

When the noon train came to a stop, the broad man in a black sack suit and scuffed brown brogans swung down off it carrying a cheap green suitcase. Others came off with him, congregating in front of the station.

The man in the black suit was named Kevin Shannon. He was from Philadelphia, where he did jobs for the company Deatherage represented, and other companies in the same line of business. He'd worked for an importing organization during Prohibition, but with the return of legal alcohol had to find some other means of earning a living. He'd gotten the word about this job and gone down to the area around the Reading Depot, and found other men he knew and gotten them together and put them on the train.

They were standing in the cold air, smoking and passing around a bottle when Deatherage's dark green Terraplane drove up. He cranked down the window. — Mister Shannon?

— Here, sir. Shannon stepped out, flicking his cigarette aside and coming to a lazy attitude of attention.

Deatherage asked him if everyone was accounted for, and told them to head across the street, to Cassidy's.

#

— One beer apiece, that's all he's going to give you. I don't want you going in drunk, you'll need your wits about you. All right, here's a gentleman from the company, to say a couple words.

— Hello, boys. I'm Otto Goerdeler, senior foreman down at Thunder. I understand you're hard workers. Glad to have you with us. The men stared back expressionlessly, slumped in the worn chairs spaced out on scuffed linoleum. There was no one else in the bar, one of the newcomers lounged against the door, arms folded, in case anyone should drift in.

When Goerdeler fumbled to a stop Deatherage stood and outlined the situation in brusque sentences. The plant in question was an oil refinery. Entrances were being blocked by strikers; they were ignoring injunctions. — The police chief started soft, but he's starting to see reason. On the other hand, the union sonsabitches are starting to play rough. They already beat up one of our boys, caught him outside the gate and beat him up. Isn't that right, Kelly?

The shovelfaced man nodded from over by the bar. — Four of 'em, he said through swollen lips. — Held my arms, and beat me up.

— So that's the situation, the kind of people you're gonna be head to head with at the gate. We could take you in at night, or sneak you in in a freight car, but we're not going to do that. You have the legal right to go in, and we're going to insist on those rights. You're here to teach these people respect for the law. Anybody packing?

Several men nodded almost imperceptibly. — Don't use them unless one of them pulls one first. We don't need any martyrs, okay? And there just might be some boys from the press there looking on. Fists and sticks and coshes. Understand what I'm saying? Now, there any questions?

Shannon raised his hand. — Sounds like it might not be so easy at the gate. There a bonus for getting through?

— Yeah. Five bucks for each man who gets past the pickets.

— Ten.

— No good, Kevin, it's set up with the client already. You're each getting one-ten an hour for every hour you spend in the plant. Plus chow and a bed and incidentals, those are provided free. That was the agreement and it's no good asking for more. Deatherage waited, then said, — Okay, the trucks are waiting outside. Go to it, and good luck.

None of them noticed the barkeep, who turned from washing glasses as they crowded out, crossed the floor to the phone booth, and groped in his change apron for a buffalo nickel.

#

Halvorsen stood against the fence, hands in his coat pockets, the sign leaning against the chainlink. Nobody had come by all morning, no cars, nothing but the nearly empty trolley rocking and squealing past every hour. That and the steadily falling snow. His breath eddied around his face, then drifted away in the crisp air. Christ, if only this cold would back off. Made sense, the winter they went on strike had to be the coldest anybody could remember. He glanced at the others. Since the incident with the scabs, Melnichak had doubled the pickets, and Golden had given them some tips as to what to do if anyone tried to get in again.

One good thing about it, they'd stopped the slow trickle of men back to work. A few had even come back out again. Old Mr. Washko, Jennie's dad, was one of those who'd returned to the fold. He and Halvorsen still hadn't passed a word, but he'd told Shorty he just didn't feel right, looking out and seeing them standing out here. Made him feel like a heel and a backstabber. So he'd grabbed his lunchpail and sashayed out past the bulls. Right now he was huddled over the trashcan fire down by the shack, rubbing his gloves together.

But there were still scabs in there. They watched them walk in at seven-thirty every morning. There wasn't any more joking. When they yelled an insult or warning now they meant it. And if a man encountered another in a bar after hours, and one had spent the day on the picket line, and the other inside the gate, well, there might be words exchanged. And then punches, till their friends had to pull them apart, and the two sides would separate again, silent and watchful till they were out of sight of each other.

In a way, he figured they were winning. The plant was closed. Thunder was paralyzed. But the strike treasury was busted, the money from the OWIU gone now, and most of the guys' personal savings were gone too. The ones with families came in every

morning looking haggard. You could see they weren't getting enough to eat, they were saving it for the kids. It was too goddamn bad.

We just got to stick, Halvorsen thought. There ain't nothing else for it. Just got to stick, till Thunner gives out. Or till we do.

He was thinking that when the trucks swung around the corner and headed down along the frozen river toward him.

#

The man in the gray overcoat lit an Old Gold and flicked the smoking match away, leaning against his car inside the Gower Avenue gate. The picketers at the east end of the plant had given way sullenly before his nudging bumper. He'd stared them down through the windscreen, till their eyes dropped and they sidled aside. Scruffy, pallid wraiths. Why the hell didn't they get wise?

But it was a good thing they didn't. Without their stupidity, their cowlike loyalty to the other fools, there'd be no call for his services.

At the moment, he was content. Forty men at a dollar ten an hour. Shannon and the other nobles got a little more but not enough to make a difference. Vansittart didn't realize yet they'd be drawing pay for twenty-four hours a day. But if they were inside the gates, that was damn well how they'd be billed. Thunner would squawk, but once he saw they were all that stood between his precious plant and destruction, he'd pay up. Would pay for much more, now he'd chosen to ride the whirlwind . . . his eyes narrowed as the total assembled itself in his head. Over a thousand a day for Shannon's boys. Fifteen percent of that was the agency's, and half of *that* was his.

A very nice seventy-five a day, on top of daily billing and expenses. With proper nurturing, it would grow fast now.

He didn't mind advising executives, planning, ordering munitions, training the guard force. It all went on his daily rate. But the real money was in violence, the longer and more widespread, the better. It was a rule of the business. The rougher things got, the more readily the money flowed.

Stick to the Union, boys, he thought. We work together, you and I, and we can make this go on a long time.

A faint smile curved his lips. Then vanished, as he felt the telltale trickle. Despite his best efforts, his damaged facial muscles could not prevent an occasional leakage of spittle. Dabbing his chin dry with the freshly laundered handkerchief he was never without, he looked out coldly on the field of coming strife.

#

Halvorsen was still thinking this, that no matter how rough it got they had to stick, when he saw the trucks bearing down on him. At the same moment an auto horn began honking in town, in staccato bursts. The danger signal.

He pulled himself off the fence, and sprinted for the far side of the avenue. The vehicles grew steadily, looming out of the falling snow as they plowed toward him.

His yell brought men spilling out of the line shack and the tents. They stared blankly at the oncoming trucks. Then began running across the field toward the gate.

They carried axe-handles, two by fours, and lengths of rodline. They came silently, running intent across the snow.

He reached the pile of ties and with another man grabbed one and lugged it toward the road. Saturated with ice, it seemed heavy as the earth. After a few yards they had to drop one end and both grab the other to drag it along. Finally they got it to the center of the street. Dropped it there, then levered it over till the spikes that had been hammered into it faced up. Behind them other teams dropped a second and then a third across the roadway, making a solid barrier of heavy oak baulks and sharpened iron teeth.

The trucks' horns sounded suddenly, together and all at once, like a herd of charging, trumpeting animals. The wheels locked, and snow leapt up, compressed pellets of it spraying up as the brakes slammed on.

He left the road and ran back for the gate, where a grim-faced phalanx of maybe twenty workers holding clubs and weapons now confronted the trucks as they plowed rocking to a halt.

The canvas flaps at their backs jerked aside, and men jumped down to the snowy road. One slipped and went sprawling, but the others stepped over him to deploy. They spread out, then stopped, standing with legs apart, surveying the gate and the grim line marshaled before it. Most wore dark overcoats and hats. Some carried clubs of their own. Others slipped on brass knuckles, or slapped blackjacks lovingly into leather gloves.

— Damn, they're big, said a man behind Halvorsen. Another muttered, — Sluggers, they call 'em. I seen boys like this in Oil City, the tankmaker's strike.

The leader, a broad man in a black suit and hightopped brogans, stepped slowly forward. He rocked as he came, like a seaman. The others waited immobile save for the steady slow slap of cudgels and blackjacks.

— Hey, you. We're new hires. We're goin' in that gate. You fellas know what's best for ye, you'll step out of our way.

— You ain't crossin' our line, Halvorsen yelled. He wasn't the official leader, but the men had all looked his way.

— Better clear out. Law's on our side, boys.

From behind Halvorsen, a youthful high voice yelled, — Hey, we don't give a good goddamn if you're Jesus Christ on a band box. He said, you ain't crossin' our line.

The suited man turned his slow attention to Halvorsen. — We're crossin' it, all right. Oney question is, whether you're goin' to be standing up after we do.

The high voice from behind him again, and this time he glanced back to see it was the redheaded kid, Latimer. — Why, they ain't nothing but a bunch of goddamn finks. — You want a taste 'a this, come on and show your cards, he yelled, swinging his sign like a baseball bat. — Right, boys?

The black suit came striding in, and the others fell in behind him. Their boots crunched in the snow.

#

She saw the two faraway lines of men come together, and for a moment it was like watching an Eisenstein movie; soundless, but full of drama; black shapes locked in struggle, the stark utter incandescence of the snow. Men crouched, then reeling away. Raised clubs, fists, bludgeons. Then a flurry of motion, and tiny figures collapsing to the snow.

She was watching from Pearson's car, up on the hill, as they sped downward toward Number One and the river. Then they passed in front of a line of houses, and she couldn't see it any more.

— Faster, she said, filled all at once with a terrible fear.

#

Halvorsen was still tender in his fist, so he held on to the sign. The blacksuit man had locked eyes with him, and kept coming; so he stood his ground and waited. The other held a short strapped object in one hand. A sap, a cosh, a leather club, no doubt weighted with lead.

As they met the other reached for his sign, and Halvorsen kicked the butt of it up from the snow, aiming for his gut. The man parried it, grabbing it with his left, and slamming the cosh down on the length of wood with a blow so hard the shock tingled his hands. Then reached under it for him. Halvorsen evaded the grasping hand and kicked him in the shin as hard as he could.

— I'm gonna take you apart piece by piece, scumbag, the man grinned. — And it's gonna be fun.

He came in again, evading Halvorsen's clubbed sign to slam the cosh down on his arm so hard a lightningflash of pain burst behind his eyes. Or was it in his eyes . . . no, the flash had come from over by the gate, where several cars had drawn up. He jerked his attention back just in time to catch the blackjack whipping in again. He tried to slip the blow, protecting his head, but memory and consciousness alike ended there.

#

Thunner stood watching from the secondfloor office. He hadn't wanted this. But he'd tried the gentle approach. The malcontents hadn't responded. They'd intimidated the other workers so thoroughly they wouldn't lift a hand. Descended to derailings, arson, beatings. Now the men who'd stayed loyal were slipping away. It had become a test of wills.

He glared down, fists clenched, wishing he could go down there himself. By God, he'd love to get his hands on one of them. He couldn't understand how a man could turn his back on his work, his employer, his country, his family. But the men out there were in some mysterious thrall. The drab little woman he'd thrown out of his office had some hold over them.

Well, he was through coddling them. He'd blow Thunder up with dynamite before he'd turn it over to people like that. Because they could never build. Only destroy.

Iron in his heart, he watched the lines crash together. Saw men close, and struggle; saw some go down, and others stagger back, tottering about holding their heads in their hands, till other figures caught up and clubbed them down into the trampled snow. And his fingers dug into his palms and he shuddered as it became another snowy landscape; far away in space and time; yet ever immanent, present, in his memory and his nights. Where men in gray greatcoats and coal-scuttle helmets bayoneted and were shot by other men in khaki over a landscape foul with death and burning, the skies roofed with the greasy gray snow that fell through the smoke of burning French villages.

He remembered one snowy night after he lost three men to the snipers and machine-gunsners the Boche left behind in every factory chimney and ruined church-tower. The

company had lagged back in the advance, afraid to stick their heads out of cover. And it was terrifying, he'd felt naked and vulnerable himself every moment there was enough daylight to sight a rifle. He'd gathered them in an abandoned Hun dugout and explained to them how they had to accept the danger, in the name of a greater good. How their sacrifice meant the horror would never touch their own land, their own families.

He watched for a long time, teeth bared, hands twitching at his sides; then turned away abruptly, sick with the sudden fullness of what he himself had willed.

#

Halvorsen blinked, conscious only of tremendous light and tremendous pain. The light came from a pale square of pinkish blue. The pain filled his skull, so jagged and huge it left no room for thought.

Then something cold came down across his forehead, and the square was eclipsed by a woman's breast.

He rolled his head, to see he was in a small nondescript room. A white iron bedstead. A chair, with Doris Golden in it, leaning forward again to adjust the cloth.

When her eyes caught his she raised her eyebrows and sat back. — So, you're awake. We had the doctor up. He said to keep an eye on you when you came to. Can you talk?

He grunted, — Uh huh. Where am I?

— The Hemlock Hotel. My room.

— . . . my place.

— You needed looking after, she said brusquely. — Several of our boys were injured. We set up an infirmary, down at the restaurant, but there weren't enough beds. So I volunteered mine.

He cleared his throat with an effort, eyeing the peach-colored wrapper she was wearing. — Where are you gonna. . . ?

— Don't bother about that. I can sleep on the floor. It won't be the first time, I assure you.

He stirred and tried to sit up, but she shoved him down. — You better let me up, he said.

— You're staying right there till the doctor comes back.

— I have to use the bathroom.

— Then you'll just have to let me help, won't you?

It was embarrassing, but only, apparently, for him. When she eased him back down and pulled up the coverlet he closed his eyes. He heard her heels tap across the room, a door creak. Before she went down the hallway he said, — I feel kind of thirsty. Could I have a drink?

When she returned he sipped at the glass, then sank back. Damn, his head. . . he suddenly remembered the fight, and struggled to sit up again. — What happened? Did the finks get past us? We stopped them, didn't we?

— They got through. They had to drag some of them in, though.

— Well, that's good, anyway.

— Yeah, you boys put up a good fight, she added, but he saw that she was worried.

— What is it? What's wrong?

She unfolded the evening *Deputy-Republican* and he saw the photograph on the front page. Himself, clubbing back at the fellow who'd attacked him. The angle at which

it had been taken didn't show the other man's blackjack. It looked as if he was unarmed, and Halvorsen was striking him down. *Strikers Attack Loyal Workers*, was the headline. Below that it read, *Ten Injured in Pitched Battle at Thunder Number One. Mayor Warns of Wider Violence.*

— The bourgeois press in action, she said. — Can you read that? Does it look like you're seeing double? Good, there's probably no concussion then. She folded the paper and tossed it aside with a look of distaste. — They *know* what happened. The son of a bitch reporter took down my statement. Is it in there? Look in vain.

He looked up at her profile, her dark hair cupping it, her determined, fiery eyes. She wasn't a beautiful woman. Not the kind you'd pick out first at a dance. But her anger made her beautiful. And without thinking about it, because if he had he probably wouldn't have done it, he reached out and took her hand.

To his surprise, it was trembling. She looked down at it. — There's no place for this, she said after a moment.

— Don't you feel it? I do.

— What do you feel?

— Admiration, he said. — Friendship. I'm not real good at talking about it. He closed his eyes, then opened them again to hers. — Don't you?

— All I feel is anger, Bill. Anger, and determination to win. There's no room for anything else. She went on, lashing out against the bosses, the criminal scum they employed, the corruption that oozed everywhere through the veins of a sick and dying system; it was quite a speech. It almost made him forget that her hand was still in his, that her fingers were searching across his palm. Lingering on the scars. Exploring the pads of tough skin where the bull-rope burned. When she fell silent at last, he hesitated, wondering if what he was doing was betrayal, of the cause, of his comrades; then decided he didn't care. And she must not have thought so either, for when he reached up she resisted for only a moment. Only enough to make it her own act, when those fiery lips lowered themselves slowly to meet his own.

Chapter 18

Dick Shotner was walking along the crooked broken brick sidewalks of Seward Avenue when he saw the shadows moving up on the hillside. It was six o'clock in the evening, the middle of January, and the city had never put lights in this part of town. It was where the few colored people in Hemlock County lived, here and across the river. He stopped. It would be wisest to walk on. Then he wondered, with a surge of excitement, if it might be something his dad and his friends would want to know about.

He left the walk quietly and slid up between two shotgun houses, hardly any snow at all between them, the paintless cracked sidingboards so close on either side he could have touched them both without extending his arms. His heart began to pound. A cow mood, sidling aside, and he smelled its ordure and oilsmoke and human waste. The shadows were full dark now, and he was one with them. Uphill, though another, even more ramshackle and crowded street of shacks and tinroofed sheds, the ground between them unpaved but the snow swept neatly away to reveal frozen black mud.

There they were again, running lightly along the top of a boxed-in structure that ran above the roofs, upward toward the high woods above the sleeping town.

He halted, uncertain, wondering what he was getting himself into. He looked through a window not three feet away, seemingly into the face of an old woman who sat staring at something out of his range of vision. Dance music seeped out through the rotting wood. He stood in darkness. To her he did not exist. His lips curved, but his heart did not. It was all too familiar. It was how people had looked at him, all through school. The boy with the weird writhing gestures, the halting, tongue-tied speech. The boy without a father. Kids who hardly knew what a bastard was, knew he was one. Yes, he was used to whispers, averted looks. So that when the man who had never been there all your life looked your way at last, acknowledged you existed, even in the dark, even as a secret —

A hammering came from above, then the crash and splinter of wood breaking.

He bent and ran awkwardly, past the last henhouse and chicken run, and scrambled up through briars and snowdrifts into the secondgrowth of the treeline. Here and there vast gradual depressions, as if of shellfire, still marked where the great hemlocks had been torn from the soil decades before. He stepped into them, staggering as he fought through the icy black claws of brambles.

He crept out from the woods, farther up the hill, to see a pool of flickering yellow below him.

In the light of an old-fashioned railroad lantern, four men were swinging pickaxes. With each blow the echo and crack of hollow wood splitting came to his ears. He huddled, hugging himself, eyes wide in the dark.

When the last plank was pried away, the lantern rose. It showed them all what lay within the long coffin-box that snaked down the hillside, braced and undergirded with heavy timbers, stuffed and insulated with rags and straw.

The men conferred over it. Then they bent, and his foxcocked ears caught the creak and squeal of long-untouched bolts being unfastened. Simultaneously he made out a familiar voice.

He got to his feet, understanding now, and stumbled down the hillside toward them.

#

Halvorsen whirled, and he saw the others jerk around and to their feet at the same time; Melnichak leveled a revolver. They stared at the coated figure that waded through the deep snow toward them.

"Hey, Bill, is that you? It's m-me. Dick."

The tension broke in curses. "What the hell is he doing here?" "Pipe down. Goddamn it."

Furious, Halvorsen hissed, "Is there anybody following you? Goddamnit, Shotner, you got no business mixed up in this."

"Ain't it enough, that I hate my lousy dad?"

"What'd he say?" said one of the others.

"Nothing," said Halvorsen, and led his boardinghouse mate a little way off. "Look, you told me about Dan Thunner and your mom and all that, and I sympathize. You got a rotten deal. But it ain't going to do you any good getting beat up by his bulls, if they come out of those woods. Or get thrown in prison for destroyin' property. So why don't you just get going on down back to Miz Ludtke's and let us do what we gotta do."

"I know what you're doing. Sabotaging the c-crude line."

"Yeah, that's what we're doing." Halvorsen peered back down the hill, fearful lest somebody had seen the kid climbing up along the pipeline that carried heated fresh petroleum from the Cherry Hill field down to the refinery.

"W-well, I w-want to help."

"This is our fight. You want to pick a scrap, start something over at the battery plant. Start a union, like you said."

"I never said that. I got nothing against the boss over there. He's an all right guy. Kind of h-hardheaded, is all. Him and me, we get along. Last week he said —"

Halvorsen debated simply planting one on the point of his chin and dragging him off into the woods. Now he was saying, "I know you fellas are acting up. Tipping over the cars, when people try to drive into N, N, Number One. I read about it in the paper. Hey, I think it's great. Oh . . . heck."

Simultaneously with his exclamation, Halvorsen realized a dark slow flood had crept through the snow toward them; was even now sliding and trickling around his boots, Shotner's galoshes. The sweet heavy odor of Pennsylvania crude eddied up, filling his nostrils. The heavy fumes made him dizzy. That would be the natural gasoline, the light fractions that were part of the oil when it came out of the ground. Years ago they'd thrown it away, burned it off. It was too volatile, too dangerous.

He shoved the kid suddenly, then again, making him stagger. "Get down the hill. Get out of this stuff. Run. Run!"

Behind them a flame glowed. It danced in the forest darkness, struggling with the wind. Then it grew brighter.

Shadows lurched toward them, running and jumping over uneven ground. The fire grew swiftly behind them, yellowwhite flame licking hungrily out over the surface of a black running stream. Building and spreading. Until by the time they reached the street and separated it was a massive column of golden white fire, towering above the town, lighting from within a flickering immense column of smoke far darker than the winter night. And left alone on the pavement under a street light, Dick Shotner realized he had a choice to make.

#

The clock ticked slowly in the office on Main Street the next morning. Deatherage sat at the long table where Thünner had first received him. He was reading letters and reports, occasionally laying them aside and making a notation, or squinting his eyes at the fire as he thought.

At precisely nine Vansittart and Hildebrandt came in. The plant manager hung his hat, looking tired. "Good morning, gentlemen. Any progress?" said Deatherage, turning the papers over, face down.

"Line's back in operation. But they spilled two hundred barrels before the pumper station noticed the pressure dropping."

"Is that a lot?"

"Not really. We don't actually own the oil till it comes through the fence, you see, so the loss is not ours. It's Connie Kleiner's, or rather, his father's."

"What do the police say?"

The lawyer snorted. "We don't have Mr. Sherlock Holmes on duty, apparently. It's obvious who opened the valves, but as for an arrest —"

Rudy Weyandt came in from the outer office as the senior men seated themselves. The executive secretary took a chair at the foot of the table, and sat silently attentive as Vansittart told them about hearing the news on the radio that morning, a ten-cent advance in East Texas crude to \$1.15 a barrel. "The first price increase since 1933," he said. "Now, tell me that's bad news."

"It is if you don't have an operating refinery."

"What about this wrecked pipeline?" murmured Deatherage, returning the papers to his briefcase.

"It's back in operation. Didn't I say that?"

"But what's to prevent them doing it again? Tonight, if they wish?"

"Nothing, far as I can see. The only solution is to post guards along it. Kleiner won't. He says he'd rather just stop pumping, avoid the chance of loss and damage. Foster refuses to help. Says he needs his boys in town."

Vansittart: "We can't operate without a steady supply of crude."

"Wheeler has barely enough men now to hold the perimeter." Deatherage took out a small book and leafed through it. "I can phone up more personnel. If you approve."

Vansittart looked torn. "We've got to keep the crude flowing, or we can't operate," he said at last. "I see no other solution. I believe Mr. Thunner will have to agree."

"How many miles of exposed pipeline, up there?"

Vansittart told him. Deatherage made a calculation and recommended fifteen additional men. The manager protested that was too many. Deatherage pointed out that they had to have three shifts, plus a spare man or two for sickness or unexpected absence.

Thunner arrived at nine-thirty. "Earl, Rudy, Ellis, Pearl. Sorry to keep you waiting," he said, crossing to the sideboard and drawing a cup of tea. "The Ministerial Association asked me to come down and explain the situation. The Presbyterians are on our side. They asked the others to come out against the strike. The Methodists and Catholics voted it down. But Reverend Sloan and Father Guertin offered to speak to the strikers, if I thought it might do any good . . . What have you got for me? Where's Otis?"

Vansittart explained that he and the senior foreman were alternating duty at the plant, sleeping in the office, in case an emergency arose. Etterlin spent most of his time there anyway, being single. Each man briefed in turn on the area under his charge.

Thunner listened with a frown, looking at one of the Remington bronzes as if he expected the bronc to begin bucking. When they reached the events of the night he said harshly, "I read it in this morning's news. I want the man who did it. What's Jerry say?"

"He says he can't tell from the evidence. Obviously strikers, but —"

"That's perfectly obvious. No one else in this county would deliberately dump and destroy crude, Mr. Deatherage. Your source on the committee, the one who's feeding you the minutes and so forth. Can you find out names for me?"

After a moment Deatherage said quietly, "I quite possibly could."

"Do so, then."

"But there might not be enough to prosecute in a court of law." Deatherage waited, then, when Thunner did not respond, took out his notebook. "I'll put my man on it," he said.

They discussed the need for protecting the pipeline. Thunner's lips tightened, but he approved additional armed guards. He asked Vansittart how the plant restart was proceeding. The manager said it wasn't.

"It isn't? Why not?"

"The outside men won't work."

"The ones we're paying a dollar-ten an hour to?"

"These are not scabs, Mr. Thunner," Deatherage explained. "These are strikebreakers. Those men you had in from surrounding refineries, those were scabs. The men we've been advertising for in the papers, new hires from TioPenn and elsewhere, they would be scabs. But these are not. I believe I explained to you prior to their hire, that they were not trained oilmen. I am afraid they are not now inclined to add that skill to their list of special qualifications."

"They won't even sweep out their quarters," said Vansittart. "It's getting to be a sty, over there in the infirmary. I've spoken to Shannon about it. About the drinking and cardplaying, too. He does not seem to be a man singularly penetrable to reason, if I may say so."

"Mr. Shannon gets a job done," said Deatherage. "He's talented, in his rough way. But I will speak to him about those matters."

"Anything else?" said Thunner, putting his hands flat on the table, preparing to rise.

"I have a proposal, sir," said Weyandt firmly.

"State it."

"The plant has been idle over a month now. But so have the strikers. I think it's time to move in for the knockout."

"How?" said Hildebrandt. "They've shown no signs of buckling. It seems to me that whatever we've thrown at them, has just made them harder."

Deatherage said, "Which is exactly what they want you to believe. In reality their condition is desperate. Would you like to know how much they have in their treasury?" He tapped his briefcase. "I'll tell you: thirty-five dollars."

"What can they be living on?" said Hildebrandt.

Weyandt said, "Hope alone, and desperation, and the charity of the few merchants who will still extend them credit. I've spoken to some of our local merchants, sir. Grocers, and so forth. Trying to feel out just how strapped they're getting, on the other side. The average worker's savings are minuscule at best, and now they are exhausted. They've sold, or hocked, everything they can carry. Their kids are hungry. They're afraid. I think that with one last push, that line will break."

"What do you suggest?"

"The velvet glove of forgiveness, and beneath it, the iron hand of fear."

Thunner said quietly, "Not quite so flowery, Rudy. Just give it to me straight. I'm as eager to get this over as they are."

"Very well, sir. Let's make them a final offer. We can't do it directly, but perhaps we can use these clergymen you mentioned, as mediators. Give them the safety committee. Bring your wages up a bit more. But hold firm on the big one: no recognition. The public will back you. You can't recognize an organization that gives way to violence. The police will back you. Foster understands that any further sabotage must be ruthlessly suppressed."

"I don't believe raising wages is economically possible in this market," said Deatherage, who had followed the conversation closely.

"Perhaps not for long. But surely we can afford it for a time. Once the union is out of the ring, we can reduce them again. In six months. A year."

Thunner nodded slowly. The secretary continued, "That's the velvet glove. The iron is: You've got to make it plain that this is the last chance for your former employees, not only here, but throughout the oil region. Any man not coming back as of the thirty-first, say, is not only fired, but blacklisted."

"The blacklist has been outlawed," said Hildebrandt.

"All of us here understand that," said Weyandt. "But is it our fault if the men should not believe we still, as employers, occasionally discuss matters pertaining to

employment policy? The foremen are contacting their men occasionally at home, right? They can pass that along confidentially."

They discussed it for a time and decided to back up a feeler via Reverend Sloan and Monsignor Guertin with an advertisement in the local papers. As the clock struck eleven Thunner got up, slapping the table. "Rudy, good thinking. I feel good about this, boys. The churches on one side, the whip on the other. If we hammer hard, this time they'll crack. If only there was some way to get that message across to the leadership."

He and Deatherage exchanged a wordless look. After that they left, one by one, each man with his own thoughts locked in his heart.

#

Mr. Cassidy turned them away when they tried to come in for their weekly meeting. Said, wiping his hands on his apron, that he was sorry. He was on their side. He'd proven that, hadn't he? They were welcome as individuals. But he couldn't host the union meeting anymore. Mr. White owned his building. They'd understand, he was sure.

"You think I'm ever coming back through these doors, you're wrong," Pearson told him. Cassidy started to protest, then fell silent. He went back behind the bar.

Halvorsen suggested the back room of the Scarlet Slipper, where he'd won his bundle. So that now they sat around one of the tables, the only folks there this early in the day, eating spaghetti off the hotplate and drinking Iroquois and Manru from the icebox. The five of them: Lew, Stan, Shorty, Halvorsen, and Doris. He watched her wind pasta around her fork with a strange mingling of desire and questioning. There was some barrier between them still. One kiss had passed between them, almost chaste, but unforgettable. One kiss, and no more.

"You must be feelin' better, Red. You're sure goin' to town on Timmy's spaghetti."

Halvorsen grunted that he felt all right.

When D'Orso went back into the kitchen Melnichak said, sitting forward, "Okay, here's the deal. Four ministers came to see me this morning. Did you see the paper? The same offer as in there. Thunder's giving us two weeks. Come back by the thirty-first, the last day of January, or we're fired."

"Not just that. I heard they're drawing the blacklist up."

"They can't do that no more."

"You tell Dan Thunner and the other bastards who own this state what they can't do. It ain't gonna be on paper. We just ain't gonna get a job after this."

They sat silent. Then Quarequo burst out, "I tell ya, we've got to use our beans. Come up with something. We wreck a tank car, hell, it ain't Thunder's railroad. We built up the pipeline, it ain't Thunder's oil. It makes us look like Bolsheviks and that's what people are startin' to call us. He can set all the deadlines he wants, I ain't going back, but we got to hurt Mister Daniel Christly Thunner. There ain't no other way to make the sonofabitching company crack."

Melnichak said quietly, "What you mean? Blow up his house or something?"

"A little dynamite might get things moving."

After a moment Golden said quietly, "It could also land us all in the electric chair."

"Maybe you got a better suggestion."

She shrugged. "I've seen lots of strikes. They ain't any of them easy. You just got to stick."

"We can't stick forever," said Pearson. "Oh, I can, and Billy here. Hail, we can live in the woods and shoot deer, and eat dandelions and blackberries in the spring. But the boys who's got families — they're just about at the end of their row."

Quarequo: "I heard a good one yesterday. One of the fellas on the line, he says, why, if I found fifty cents in my pocket, I'd know I had somebody else's pants on."

"Har de har."

"What about Holderlin? Anybody know if they're coming out?"

Golden said, "I met with the shop steward and several of the men yesterday, to ask for money and help. They're discussing a strike vote themselves. The trouble is, they're AF of L. I got the laying-on-of-hands routine, but no contribution."

"Bastards."

"But we still got to stick."

The Southerner upended his bottle. "It's just like the War. One last push, and the Boche cracked. Thunder ain't shipped a can or a case since we walked out. I got a guy on the inside, he's a scab, but we talk. He tells me them finks in there ain't turning a hand. Boozing it up, playing craps all night long. They even been bringing girls in from Miss Minnie's. That adds up to heavy sugar. We keep poor-mouthing ourselves but old Dan ain't got all the money in the world neither. All we got to do is give him that last hard shove."

"Let me tell you about something the workers did in Akron," Golden said then.

She told them about the baseball game one day when the teams from two factories refused to play because the umpire was a company man they hated. The ump refused to leave, so both teams simply sat down on their bases, in the outfield, wherever they were. They wouldn't play ball. They just sat, until in confusion and rage the ump was replaced. And how the next week a dispute had broken out between some workers and a supervisor in one of the plants, and they were on the edge of giving in when one of the men said, "Aw, to hell with him, let's just sit down." And how their simple refusal to touch their machines had brought the whole factory to a halt.

Shorty looked puzzled. "Swell, but — we ain't in the plant no more. How can we sit down when we ain't in the plant?"

But Melnichak was nodding. "Use your bean, sluggo. Don't you hear what she's saying? We go in and occupy it."

"What's Chief Foster gonna say about that?"

"What can he do? He can't arrest us all. Remember when we rebuilt the shack? We called their bluff and they backed down."

"We'll have to fight. Them finks, and the oil bulls —"

"We fought them before. This time we do it our way."

Heads together, they began to plan.

#

Deatherage was sitting in his room at the Grant House, listening to the radio news on KDKA. Federal government expenditures had just gone over the four billion dollar mark, with almost half of it deficit spending. The Japanese delegates had walked out of the five-power naval conference, ending all armaments limitations. Three little girls in Ebensburg were being questioned over the shotgun slaying of their father. When the phone rang he set down his glass, took a last drag on his cigarette, and stubbed it out. Cupping the mouthpiece, he said guardedly, "Hello."

"Mr. Deatherage? This is L-390. When the moon comes over the mountain."

"Unknown yesterday are the stars of tomorrow. Give your report."
The voice on the other end spoke for some time. The agency man listened, then reached into his coat, hanging on the valet, and got his notebook. Scribbled a line, holding the earpiece close to his ear.

"That's it. That's the decision."

"What time is it planned for?" he said.

When the other rang off he looked for a moment at what he had written. It read, *mass attack on No. One main gate six am. Refinery to be occupied. No guns.*

Deatherage poured himself another whiskey, and drank half of it off. He looked out the window at the dark sky, eyes narrowed against the smoke from a fresh Old Gold.

At last he decided, and picked up the phone again.

"Sir? Pearl Deatherage here.

"I believe the time has come to smash this union business forever."

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IF

If you drive us crazy
and we kill you
you have committed suicide.

By Joseph Epperson

Marxist Humor

Dear Owners: Sorry,
but it doesn't look like
there's enough recent production
from your side
for us to keep your positions
open. Once again, sorry.
Yours Truly, THE WORKERS.

By Pamela Bond

Editorial Policy

Struggle is an anti-establishment, revolutionary literary journal oriented to the working-class struggle. We seek to reach "disgruntled" workers, dissatisfied youth and all the oppressed and abused and inspire them to fight the rich capitalist rulers of the U.S. and the planet. We stand for the working class to overthrow the capitalists in a proletarian revolution, smash their state machinery and establish a workers' government which would build genuine socialism with a policy of democracy for the masses, suppression for the bosses. While this is our goal, we support all struggles against exploitation and oppression.

The capitalists and their mass media, publishing industry and educational system suppress rebellious and pro-working class literature and art. Instead they flood our minds with militarism, racism, mysticism, dollar-worship, anti-woman and anti-gay brutality, anti-foreigner hysteria, empty sentimentality and religious platitudes. The healthy literature of working-class rebellion finds few outlets — in political newspapers, at demonstrations, in leaflets, in underground zines, in performances at meetings, small clubs and coffee houses. *Struggle* provides a forum for this literature and art.

Struggle is open to a variety of artistic and literary forms and anti-establishment political and cultural views. We look for works with artistic power which rebel against some element of the capitalist power structure or against the system itself. We look for works which depict the working-class struggle and advocate the proletarian revolution, but at the same time we print many varied works that are hostile in different ways to the ruling elite. We look for writings which condemn the two political parties of the rich, as well as the sellout union leaders and bourgeois misleaders of minority communities and women. We will not print racist, sexist, national chauvinist or homophobic material.

Struggle believes in the initiative of the oppressed themselves and opposes the bureaucracy that turned the Soviet workers' government away from the socialist path in the early 1920's, as well as the complete revision of Marxist theory, by Soviet and other false "communists," into a justification of reformism and state-capitalism. Until November 1993, *Struggle* was published by the Detroit branch of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, and the party gave great creative, political and material support to the magazine. But at the organization's Fifth Congress, a majority, discouraged by the lull in the mass movements, voted to disband the party without proposing any worked-out revolutionary alternative. A minority opposed this collapse. Today a grouping of revolutionaries continues to develop anti-revisionist communism in the MLP's spirit. They are united in the Communist Voice Organization, which produces the *Communist Voice* theoretical journal. *Struggle* is associated with this trend. We will continue, but we need greater readers' input, donations, subscriptions and help in distribution.

Struggle's editor is Tim Hall, an activist and Marxist-Leninist since the 1960's. *Struggle* is a non-profit magazine, produced and distributed by the voluntary labor of a very few people. It pays its contributors in copies. Subscription rates are \$2 per issue (\$2.50 by mail), \$10 for a subscription of four, \$12 for four for institutions, \$15 for four overseas, free to prisoners.

Struggle welcomes poems, songs, short stories, short plays, line drawings and cartoons. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We try to critique everything. Bulk discounts and back issues (on anti-racism, against the Persian Gulf War, depicting postal workers' struggle) are available. Checks or money orders must be made payable to Tim Hall — Special Account. *Struggle* can be reached at P.O. Box 13261, Detroit, MI 48213-0261.

▲▲▲ *Struggle* readers interested in the theoretical and political issues facing revolutionary minded people today should send for a sample copy of *Communist Voice*, theoretical journal of the Communist Voice Organization. CV analyzes the issues involved in rebuilding the communist movement, stressing criticism of the ideas of revisionism (from Stalin through Brezhnev and Mao), Trotskyism, anarchism and other opportunist trends from the standpoint of a living, revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Recent articles on the economic crisis in Asia, what happened to the transition to socialism in the Soviet Union, etc. By mail \$3 per copy; \$18 for six issues. Checks or money orders as above. ▲▲▲

A Class Act

The Wall Street Journal reports that
none of these fellows from
Groton and St. Marks
Williams and Yale
are suffering any ill effects
from their Vietnam service;
the War has helped them make
"the tough decisions."
I don't doubt that it has.
Surely when you've napalmed
some fishing village on the Mekong or
thrown a VC
out of a helicopter
it must be nothing
to tell the Economics Minister of Mexico
that he has to double the price of bread
or inform the Argentine Minister of Finance
that his steel workers will have to accept
a 40% reduction in wages.
Vietnam, South America or South Brooklyn
these guys have "no problem with that."

By Russell T. Harrison